

## 111 Matching Approved Social Housing Applicants to Properties

### 1. Policy

Link Housing's Policy for Matching People to Properties describes:

- criteria for matching applicants to vacant properties
- who will be allocated to which property
- offer-making decisions and process

### 2. Scope

This Policy applies to approved social housing applicants and permanent social housing tenants. It does not cover applicants for and tenants living in affordable housing or tenants in transitional housing.

### 3. Principles

The principles Link Housing applies to the way it matches people to properties are:

- Be fair, efficient and consistent in the decisions we make about suitable allocations
- Make the best use of properties - make sure the number of bedrooms and living areas, and any special facilities or modifications, are utilised to their maximum advantage.
- Ensure the property is suitable for the tenant - consider both the needs and preferences of the highest priority applicants when deciding who should be offered a particular property, and meeting those special needs which are hardest to meet ahead of needs that can be met by a number of our properties
- Facilitate successful tenancies - balance issues of suitability of the allocation for the organisation, the tenant and the community in order to minimise future tenancy problems and maximise tenant satisfaction
- The impact of a housing a person in an unsuitable environment can have long-standing impacts.

### 4. Allocation Decisions

Allocation decisions are based on:

- information about the applicant's needs and preferences collected on the application form, at interview and in discussion with the applicant and/or their advocate or support worker (where permission has been given for Link Housing to access such information); and
- information about the property and neighbourhood; and
- the application of our standard allocation criteria as to whether the potential tenant and property are a good match.

Link Housing has three types of properties: capital properties owned by Link Housing, properties rented from the NSW Government, and properties rented through the private rental market. We do not let applicants specify their preference for type of property.

### 5. Sensitive Allocations

This involves making exceptions to Link Housing's allocation policy in order to ensure the approved applicant is able to comfortably reside in the proposed property taking into consideration local dynamics.

In some cases, Link Housing may need to categorise a vacant property as a sensitive allocation if the previous tenancy had not settled in well with the local community. This means

that the Access and Demand Team has the authority to offer the property to tenants who are best suited to both the property and the local area dynamics. Approval of a property to be allocated as a sensitive allocation can only be granted by the Head of Housing Services.

## 6. Pre-offer Interview

Approved applicants will generally be contacted prior to being made an offer to check if they are still eligible for social housing.

Applicants may need to provide supporting documentation to confirm current eligibility.

## 7. Bedroom categories

Link Housing will match applicants to property using the below table as a guide:

Household Members	Property Type
Single person	Boarding housing, room, studio, one bedroom
Couples no children	One bedroom
Two adults (but not couple)	Two bedrooms
Household with one child	Two bedrooms
Household with two children	Two bedrooms or three bedrooms
Household with three to four children	Three bedrooms or four bedrooms
Household with more than four children	Four bedrooms

## 8. Additional Bedrooms

Family size and composition will be considered when Link Housing decides what size and style of property to allocate. An extra bedroom or bedrooms may be allocated in some circumstances. For example:

- The applicant cares for a child or children part-time but they do not live with the applicant permanently
- The applicant needs a carer to stay with the applicant full time or part time
- The applicant or a member of the household is expecting a baby
- The applicant is trying to regain custody of a child or children, and needs stable housing for them before the application is approved
- A member of the household is temporarily absent (overseas, in prison, in hospital) for a maximum period of 3 to 6 months (depending on circumstances)
- Where there are children of the same sex over 18 years, they are considered unable to share a bedroom.
- Where there are children of different sexes over 11 years they are not expected to be able to share a bedroom.
- A child or adult who would normally share a bedroom needs their own room for medical or other reason
- Tenant identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

## 9. Allocation Criteria

Properties with the following characteristics may not always be allocated to the applicant in highest overall need but will be allocated to the person with the highest need for that type of accommodation:

- Property with modifications/adaptations
- Ground floor accommodation or level access accommodation
- Access to garden or yard
- Complexes that are reserved for people over the age of 55 years or 45 years of age for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

## 10. Reasonable Offers

A reasonable offer is one that meets all the **essential needs** of the household in terms of the size (e.g. number of bedrooms, space required for medical equipment) and physical accessibility of the housing (in terms of its location, level, modifications etc.).

All applicants will be made two reasonable offers.

## 11. Withdrawal of an offer

Link Housing may withdraw an offer of accommodation in exceptional circumstances. These circumstances may include:

- Where there has been a change in the applicant's circumstances and the applicant household is no longer eligible for the type, style or size of accommodation offered
- Following verification, the applicant is not eligible for the property or for social housing
- Where an error has been made with the offer
- Where the property is no longer available for letting
- Where an offer of accommodation could put a vulnerable applicant at risk of harm
- An approved applicant is not able to demonstrate that s/he has independent living skills with or without support (note: Link Housing will facilitate support where appropriate).

## 12. Applicant preferences

An applicant's preferences will be taken into account whenever possible. For example, wanting to be near a train rather than a bus route, wanting a fully fenced yard for the dog, wanting to be close to the school the children currently attend.

However, an offer will **not** be considered unreasonable if it fails to meet those preferences. There may be some preferences that are actually needed for a particular person, and care must be taken to consider these carefully and make an individual assessment.

## 13. Locational preference

A locational preference will only be considered a need if there is an overwhelming social or medical reason. Locational preference needs can be assessed by area, but applicants cannot be suburb specific.

## 14. Pets

If an applicant has pets, they will only be offered a property where pets are permitted.

## 15. Informal offers

Where an applicant has an existing urgent need for housing and no property that matches their requirements is expected to become vacant in the near future, Link Housing may make an informal offer to the applicant for a property that partially but not fully meets the person's expressed needs or preferences. In this case the applicant is given the option of rejecting the informal offer. This offer will not count towards the quota of offers.

## 16. Legislative Framework and Related Policies

- Housing Pathways Policies & Eligibility Criteria
- Tenant Initiated Transfer Policy
- Local Allocations Strategies
- Pets Policy
- Management Transfer Policy

## 17. Privacy and Confidentiality

Link Housing will keep applicants', tenants' and residents' information and feedback confidential, in line with privacy laws and standards.

## 18. Complaints and appeals

A tenant who is not happy with a decision made by Link Housing or who believes that Link Housing has not followed this policy can complain or appeal using the complaints and appeals policies that are available on the Link Housing website [www.linkhousing.org.au](http://www.linkhousing.org.au) or by phoning Link Housing on 9412 5111.

A tenant or applicant who is not happy with a decision made by Link Housing or who believes that Link Housing has not followed this policy can complain or appeal using the complaints and appeals policies.

## 19. Quality Assurance

The Matching Social Housing Applicants to Properties Policy will be formally reviewed every two years or when necessitated through a sufficient change in circumstances.